



GENERAL ORDER



Subject: Notification of Next of Kin in Cases of Serious Injuries or Fatalities	Series 401	Number 8	Distribution A	Change Number
	Effective Date October 17, 1994			
	Revision Date			

The purpose of this order is to prescribed the procedure to be followed when members of the Metropolitan Police Department are required to notify relatives of persons who are victims of serious or fatal injuries. This order consists of the following parts:

PART I Responsibilities and Procedures for Members of the Department

- A. Incidents Requiring Notification of Next of Kin.
- B. Notifying Officers.

PART II Responsibilities and Procedures for Supervisory and Command Personnel

- A. Commanding Officer, Homicide Branch, Criminal Investigations Division.
- B. Commanding Officer, Traffic Enforcement Branch, Special Operations Division.
- C. Commanding Officer, Youth Division.
- D. Watch Commanders.

PART I

A. Incidents Requiring Notification of Next of Kin.

Members of the Metropolitan Police Department are required to notify relatives of persons who have been involved in automobile or industrial accidents or who are victims of crime or other types of accidents where a person has received serious or fatal injuries, including apparent suicide victims. Theses procedures shall also apply to Medical Examiner cases of which the following examples are cited:

1. Where death results without medical attention with a 24-hour period immediately preceding death in a private residence with no member of the immediate family residing with the deceased.
2. A person who was admitted to a hospital dies within a 24-hour period after admission without prior medical attention.

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3. In any other public or private place located within the District of Columbia where a relative is not present and the deceased has not received medical attention within the 24-hour period preceding death.

B. Notifying Officers.

1. Prior to notification, the notifying officer shall make a reasonable attempt to ascertain the physical and mental condition of the person to be notified. If the person is elderly, ill, or infirm every effort shall be made to have a friend, neighbor, clergyman, or doctor present at the time of notification even if the person appears to be in good physical and mental health. Appearances can be deceiving and laymen normally cannot predict the reaction to situations of this nature.

2. If notification is to be made at a place of employment, the person in charge of the business shall be contacted to ascertain the physical and mental condition of the person to be notified. The company nurse or first aid attendant, if available, or other appropriate person shall be requested to be present at the time of notification.

3. Notification shall be made without delay but, only after a determination that the person or persons receiving the notification are in fact the proper persons to be notified.

4. The most constructive advice which may be given insofar as the method of revealing the sad news is to imagine yourself in the recipient's place. Consider the normal reaction of a person who has been informed of the serious injury to or death of a close relative. Proceed with the notification in a gradual manner, avoiding the blunt or abrupt disclosure of the news by the careful selection of each word or phrase and the manner in which the notification is made.

PART II

A. Commanding Officer, Homicide Branch.

Commanding Officer, Homicide Branch shall:

1. Ensure that the next of kin is notified in cases involving death or any other case in which the Homicide Branch has investigative responsibility, as determined by a Homicide Branch official, which are not a direct result of a traffic-related incident and meet the requirements of Part IA of this order.

2. Ensure that the Watch Commander of the District in which the offense occurred is notified whenever it has been determined a case is to be handled by a District Investigative unit. The unit with investigative responsibility will ensure that the next of kin is notified in cases not handled by the Homicide Branch.

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B. Commanding Officer, Traffic Enforcement Branch.

Commanding Officer, Traffic Enforcement Branch shall:

1. Ensure that the next of kin is notified in cases of serious bodily injury or death which are a result of a traffic-related incident.

2. In the event that Traffic Enforcement Branch personnel are unable to notify the next of kin due to a lack of manpower, notify the watch commander of the district in which the individual to be notified resides and/or works.

C. Commanding Officer, Youth Division.

Commanding Officer, Youth Division shall ensure that when messages are received by this department from out-of-town police agencies requesting that notification be made to a relative residing in the District of Columbia in regard to the next of kin being seriously injured or dead, Youth Division personnel shall notify the relative.

D. Watch Commanders.

District Watch Commanders shall:

1. Upon being notified by the Commanding Officer, Homicide Branch or the Commanding Officer, Traffic Enforcement Branch that notification of next of kin cannot be accomplished due to a lack of manpower, obtain all known information surrounding the incident as well as all known information concerning the person to be notified; and

2. Ensure that the notification is made as soon as possible and that the provisions of Part IB are adhered to.


Fred Thomas
Chief of Police

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